DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 216 630 HE 015 083

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TITLE Summer Bridge Program: A Dropout Intervention Program for Minority and Low-Income Students at the University of California, San Diego.
PUB DATE 21 Mar 82
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, NY, March 21, 1982).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Persistence; Articulation (Education); Basic Skills; *College Bound Students; *Dropout Prevention; Economically Disadvantaged; Educational Counseling; Educationally Disadvantaged; Higher Education; *High Risk Students; Low Income Groups; Minority Groups; Peer Influence; Potential Dropouts; School Holding Power; School Orientation; Study Skills; *Summer Programs; *Transitional Programs
IDENTIFIERS Summer Bridge Program; *University of California San Diego

ABSTRACT

Results of participation in a Summer Bridge Program at the University of California, San Diego, in 1978 for 30 high-risk, minority group, and low-income students are discussed. The program is based on Tinto's (1975) theoretical synthesis of research on dropouts from higher education and is designed to increase a student's integration and counterbalance initial disadvantages. The program provided 3 weeks of intensive instruction in mathematics, reading, writing, and study skills. Students were housed on the campus, and live-in peer counselors provided support and supervision. The students participated in diagnostic testing, tutoring, and individual and small group peer counseling. Students met with a counseling psychologist twice weekly to solve group problems and attended meetings about academic support services. In addition, students were given paid work experience assignments, and recreational activities and field trips were scheduled for weekends and some evenings. At the beginning of the fall quarter 1981, Summer Bridge students had the highest retention among four comparison groups, exceeding by 31 percent the rate of a comparable group of minority, low-income students. Similar retention rate differences have been observed for subsequent Summer Bridge Programs conducted in 1979 and 1980. Summer Bridge is not a remedial program, but is designed to address many issues that affect a student's decision to stay at college, to build a network of peer group support, and to make the campus a familiar place before the fall quarter begins. The goal of the program is academic and social integration and transition from high school to college. (SW)

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Summer Bridge Program: A Dropout Intervention Program for Minority and Low-Income Students at the University of California, San Diego

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Presented at the 1982 Annual Meeting, American Educational Research Association, New York City, March 21, 1982 as part of a symposium "Remedial and Developmental Education"

HE 015 083

Abstract

Based on Tinto's theoretical synthesis of research on dropouts from higher education, a group of high-risk minority and low-income students were identified and 30 were randomly selected to participate in a Summer Bridge Program at the University of California, San Diego, in 1978. The summer program provided instruction and pre-entrance counseling. Students also received academic assistance and counseling throughout the 1978-79 academic year. At the beginning of Fall Quarter, 1981, Summer Bridge students had the highest retention among four comparison groups, exceeding by 31% the rate of a comparable group of minority, low-income students. Similar retention rate differences have been observed for subsequent Summer Bridge Programs conducted in 1979 and 1980.

Tinto's (1975) theoretical synthesis of research on dropouts from higher education identifies family background (such as social status, community of residence, parental expectations), individual attributes (such as sex, race, ethnicity, and ability), and past educational experiences (such as grade point average and social attainment) as the most important factors related to college attrition. These factors have an effect on two types of commitment a student makes--a commitment to the goal of higher education and a commitment to the particular institution.

This combination of factors and commitments, then, affects students' integration into both the academic and social systems of the college which, Tinto contends, "most directly relates to continuance in that college" (p.96). As academic and social integration lead to new levels of commitment, Tinto writes ". . . it is the interplay between the individual's commitment to the goal of college completion and his commitment to the institution that determines whether or not the individual decides to drop out from college and the form of dropout behavior the individual adopts" (p.96).

Past educational experience, individual attributes, and family background are not factors that can be affected by institutional programs. Institutional characteristics such as size and quality are also factors in the drop-out process that are difficult to change. However, Tinto underscores the importance of the individual's experience in the academic and social systems of the college and the effect of that experience on changing level of commitment and retention rates. It is in this area, which he calls "interactions with the college environment," that programs to reduce attrition should concentrate.

Tinto's analysis provides a basis for developing programs to reduce attri-

tion rates. At the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), the Summer Bridge Program was designed to increase both academic and social integration of low-income and minority students. The retention rates of Summer Bridge students, when compared with similar students not participating in the program, provide a test of the practical implications of Tinto's conceptual model of the dropout process. According to the model, increasing a student's integration can counterbalance initial disadvantages.

Summer Bridge '78

UCSD's Summer Bridge Program began in the summer of 1978 for entering Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) freshmen. EOP students at UCSD are low-income, educationally disadvantaged students, a large proportion of whom are ethnic minority students. (See Appendix A for students' ethnicity). Approximately 20% of these students are admitted by Special Action (SA) and do not meet University admissions requirements. However, the remaining 80% who are regularly admissible have also had high attrition rates, though not as high as the rates for SA students. The Summer Bridge program was designed to increase the retention of EOP students.

The students. A randomly selected group of 90 entering EOP freshmen were invited to apply for the program. Of these, 30 were randomly selected to attend. Two students dropped out of the program prior to the end of the first week, leaving a total Summer Bridge enrollment of 28, of whom 27 were ethnic minority students.

Of the 90, there were 15 students initially identified as alternates. These students wanted to attend, but could not because of enrollment limitations. They constitute the closest approximation to a control group.

A total of 45 students did not respond to the invitation to attend and they constitute the third comparison group.

A fourth comparison group consisted of 45 non-EOP freshmen who were randomly selected from the enrollment list of new freshmen.

The program. The program provided three weeks of intensive instruction in mathematics, reading, writing, and study skills. Students were in classes between seven and eight hours a day and were assigned an average of two hours of homework daily. They were all housed in a UCSD residence hall, and live-in peer counselors, who were successful UCSD undergraduates, provided support and supervision.

Summer Bridge students participated in diagnostic testing, tutoring, and individual and small group peer counseling. Twice weekly, students met with a counseling psychologist and the program coordinator in a Communications Workshop that provided a forum for solving group problems. Students also attended meetings about academic support services that would be available during the school year and information was provided by campus offices such as financial aid, academic advising, and career planning.

Further, students were given work experience assignments which they were required to complete in order to receive one-half ($150) of the $300 they were eligible to earn as Bridge participants. Work experience was included in the program because on-campus jobs have been identified as a positive factor in retention. Also, students who chose to come to the program often left summer jobs and lost earnings that were not made up by financial aid. Students were able to earn the remaining $150 during fall and winter quarters, which also served to keep them involved in work during the school year.

In addition to academic requirements, support services, information sessions, and work opportunities, recreational activities and field trips were scheduled for weekends and some evenings. Activities included a beach party and bonfire, disco dance, ethnic dinner and talent show, intramural athletics, a trip to the zoo, and a two-day rustic camping retreat.

The Office of Academic Support and Instructional Services (OASIS) at UCSD sponsored Summer Bridge. OASIS also provided continued support to the students throughout the 1978-79 academic year through its Reading and Study Skills Center, Writing Center, and Tutorial Program. The OASIS Academic Success Program provided special services to all EOP freshmen during the school year and used the EOP Summer Bridge students to help reach out to other EOP freshmen. Professional and peer counselors were available throughout the academic year and workshops were held on topics such as time management, personal goal setting for academic success, building self-confidence, exam preparation, stress reduction, and career planning.

The results. At the beginning of Fall Quarter, 1981, third year retention rates were computed for Summer Bridge students and the three comparison groups:

1. Alternates were those students who wanted to attend Summer Bridge but could not because of enrollment restrictions (n=15).
2. Non-respondents were those students who did not respond to the invitation to attend Summer Bridge (n=45).
3. Non-EOP were randomly selected, non-EOP freshmen (n=45).

It is clear in Table 1 that Summer Bridge participants had a higher retention rate than all comparison groups at the end of the first year, and this higher rate was maintained after three years. Further, the Summer Bridge

Table 1

Retention of Summer Bridge Participants and Comparison Groups
1978-1981

	Fall, 1979		Fall, 1980		Fall, 1981	
Bridge '78						
Participants	82%		64%		61%	
Alternates	60%	} 42%	47%	} 28%	53%	} 30%
Non-respondents	36%		22%		22%	
Non-EOP	80%		53%		44%	
Bridge '79						
Participants			76%		68%	
Alternates			63%	} 51%	53%	} 38%
Non-respondents			46%		32%	
Non-EOP			82%		60%	
Bridge '80						
Participants					86%	
Alternates					64%	} 60%
Non-respondents					57%	
Non-EOP/SAA[a]					89%	

[a]Program name changed to Educational Opportunity Program/Student Affirmative Action (EOP/SAA)

students' retention rate was 31 percentage points higher than the overall rate for combined EOP (alternates and non-respondents) non-participants (30%). The rate for Bridge students was also higher than that of non-EOP students (44%). For a group that traditionally has the lowest retention rate, this rate increase was important.

Thus, the main objective of the Summer Bridge Program, which is to increase the retention of EOP students, has been achieved up to now. Follow-up of these students and the comparison groups continues.

Summer Bridge '79, '80, and '81

The students. Similar data has been collected on students who participated in subsequent Summer Bridge programs, which were expanded to four weeks. In 1979, there were 50 students, in 1980 there were 35 students, and in 1981 there were 50 students. (The number of participants varied with availability of funds, and selection procedures were not strictly random in these subsequent years, as attempts to balance sex, ethnicity, and college were used. However, academic records were not used in selection.)

The results. Retention data on the Bridge '78, '79, and '80 students are also included in Table 1. Clearly, the pattern observed for Bridge '78 continues for subsequent programs. Bridge student retention exceeds the alternates' rate and overall EOP rates for 1979 and 1980. With one exception, Bridge students' retention exceeds that of non-EOP students as well.

Academic Performance

Although increasing retention rates are the main objective of the program, academic performance is also of interest. Generally, Bridge students have a B-/C+ average, but there is much variation in the grade point average (GPA) data included in Table 2. Two comparisons are illustrative. The Bridge '78 students are a half grade-point lower (2.59) than non-EOP students (3.09), and

non-respondents (2.75) surpass Bridge student performance. However, when one considers the lower retention rate of non-respondents (22%) compared to Bridge students (61%), the GPA difference is not surprising. The full range of Bridge students is being retained compared to only higher achieving students among the alternates. It is important to remember that the Summer Bridge Program is a retention program. It is not possible to provide, in a few weeks time, a complete remediation program for specific deficiencies, where they exist.

Instead, the program is intended to integrate students into the campus so that during the course of their academic career they can make use of the variety of instructional activities and academic support services that will be helpful to them. Although GPA and accumulated units are of interest, retention rates remain the primary measure of program effectiveness. This spring quarter, 1982, will provide the first look at graduation rates for Bridge '78 students, while a fifth group of students are being invited for Bridge '82.

Discussion

Program effect. It is essential that programs be designed so that effects can be measured and results analyzed. Such an approach is uncommon among programs for low-income and minority students. However, the data provided on the original Bridge '78 students and the two subsequent replications provide a base, that many programs do not have, from which to seek funds. Data collection is worth the time and effort for two reasons. First, if the program is not having an effect, modifications can be made. Second, if the program is having an effect, support can be more easily obtained for continuing or expanding the program.

Non-remedial. In considering the success of this program, it is important to emphasize the distinction between a program that is primarily intended to

Table 2
Retention Rate, SAT Scores, GPA and Units
Summer Bridge and Comparison Groups

Group	Fall, 1981 Retention	SAT Verbal	SAT Math	EHSGPA[a]	Spring, 1981 Cum GPA	Spring, 1981 Cum Units
Bridge 78						
Participants	61% (17/28)	383	471	3.35	2.59	115
Alternates	53% (8/15)	390	449	3.30	2.50	109
Non-respondents	22% (10/45)	525	558	3.47	2.75	110
Non-EOP	44% (20/45)	549	612	3.68	3.09	129
Bridge 79						
Participants	68% (34/50)	382	464	3.40	2.57	71
Alternates	53% (10/19)	386	590	3.54	3.14	89
Non-respondents	32% (16/50)	484	551	3.46	2.73	83
Non-EOP	60% (30/50)	531	592	3.61	3.10	83
Bridge 80						
Participants	86% (30/35)	415	454	3.31	2.62	40
Alternates	64% (21/33)	442	511	3.34	2.24	35
Non-respondents	57% (20/35)	485	554	3.52	2.56	42
Non-EOP/SAA	89% (31/35)	533	600	3.51	2.64	45

[a]EHSGPA is the evaluated high school grade point average (GPA) which is computed only on academic courses required for admission.

remediate deficiencies and one whose main purpose is to integrate low-income and minority students into the campus. Summer Bridge is not a remedial program. For example, although some students arrive with deficiencies in math skills, others are proficient. The same range of achievement is present for other subjects such as writing and chemistry. And, the same range of skills exists among participants on other important variables: assertiveness, experience with the majority culture, self-confidence, study skills, etc. The Summer Bridge Program is designed to address many issues that affect a student's decision to stay at the University, to build a network of peer group support, and to make the campus a familiar place before the fall quarter begins.

Thus, the stigma that has been attached to some programs has not been attached to Bridge. Instead, students proudly sport their Bridge t-shirts when fall starts. They want to show that they are ahead of the game and that is the feeling they consistently report. "I know who to go to." "I know what my financial aid package is." "I know I can see the staff anytime I'm down." "The peer counselors are great and will help me out." "I feel like this school is my place."

It is important to realize that the majority of students who leave school do not leave because they are in academic jeopardy. Thus, Summer Bridge is not intended to patch up deficient students who would otherwise leave. Students leave for a variety of reasons, as Tinto and other researchers have noted. It is our task to see to it that more students stay. We will not accomplish that with programs that are narrowly focused on academic skills.

Academic emphasis. Nonetheless, the program does emphasize preparedness and much of a student's day is spent on reading, writing and mathematics. The

decision to emphasize academics was made because Bridge is a transition experience from high school to college. Further, the goal of Summer Bridge is academic and social integration. Tinto argues thac an overemphasis on either can lead to attrition, but "some of the strain between the demands of the academic system and those of the social system of the college may be alleviated if friendship ties are established with persons having strong academic orientations. In this way academic and social system influences may coalesce, providing opportunities for both social interaction and mutual assistance" (p.108). At a school like UCSD, with a very competitive academic environment, this integration is important.

In Bridge, students' common experiences revolve around their academic classes and assignments. Their differing achievement levels allow them to see one another as sources of support and assistance, and the program is designed to foster group study and group collaboration. Importantly, this camaraderie and teamwork continue into the first year of school and beyond, as Bridge students choose to enroll in classes together, live together, and work together as tutors and peers for later Summer Bridge and OASIS programs.

Rate changes. Lastly, it is important to recognize the obvious fact that big changes can be made in retention rates of non-traditional students. These low rates are not immutable, as many would have had us believe. In Summer Bridge, students are given a few weeks head start on fall quarter and retention rates jump by 25-30%.

Tinto's synthesis suggested that changing interaction patterns and increasing academic and social integration could counter the effects of background variables and institutional characteristics. Bridge works because students start the fall warmed up for the academic challenge; knowledgeable about sources

of support among students, scaff, and faculty; comfortable in the campus setting; and better prepared in math, writing and study skills.

If we are serious about increasing non-traditional students' access to higher education, we will stop excusing our failure to retain them by noting their low SAT scores, the trigonometry class they didn't take, or the fact that English is not their first language. Instead, we will build programs that make the school their place. Then, more will stay.

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Note: Copies available upon request to authors at OASIS, B-005, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, CA 92093

Appendix A

Summer Bridge Students By Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Bridge 78	Bridge 79	Bridge 80	Bridge 81
American Indian	0	1	1	1
Chinese/Chinese American	1	0	2	1
Japanese/Japanese American	3	3	1	2
Other Asian	3	2	0	6
Filipino/Pilipino	7	12	11	10
Other Polynesian	0	0	0	0
Southeast Asian	0	1	0	1
Black/Afro-American	10	14	10	15
Latin American/Latino	1	3	1	2
Mexican/Mexican American/Chicano	2	11	7	10
Other Spanish/Spanish American	0	0	0	0
Other Non-White	0	1	0	0
Pakistani and East Indian	0	0	0	0
Other White	1	2	2	2
Total	28	50	35	50